

What is a nurse practitioner (NP)?



Nurse practitioners (NP), also known as registered nurses (RN) in the extended class, are RNs who have met additional education, experience and exam requirements set by the College of Nurses of Ontario. They are authorized to diagnose, order and interpret diagnostic tests, and prescribe medication and other treatment.

How is the scope of practice broader for NPs than RNs?

NPs can, for example:



independently diagnose and treat illnesses



order and interpret diagnostic tests, including X-rays, ultrasounds and blood tests



prescribe medications including controlled drugs and substances



set and cast fractures and dislocated joints

A select history of the NP role and RNAO's leading advocacy:

1800s - 1900s

Rural and remote "outpost nurses" in place of physicians.

1960s: NP role emerges in primary health care.



1997

The Expanded Nursing Services for Patients Act, 1997 formalizes the NP role in Ontario.



2007 - 2008

2007: The first NP-led clinic (NPLC) opens its doors in Sudbury.

2008: At an RNAO media conference, the Ontario government commits to opening 25 additional NPLCs.



2010

NPs are able to enroll in Canada's first Anesthesia Care program at the University of Toronto.



2011 - 2012

Advocated by RNAO, amendments to Regulation 965 of the Public Hospitals Act, 1990 expanded NP scope of practice to admit, treat, transfer and discharge hospital inpatients.



2014

Ontario commits to hire 75 attending NPs in long-term care.



2017 - 2018

NP authority is expanded to prescribe controlled substances.

2019 - current

RNAO continues to call for greater numbers of NPs and role expansion to increase access to health care for all.

What is the status of NPs in Ontario today?

NPs add value to the health system and advance the goals of the Quadruple Aim

- Patients report high satisfaction with NP care.

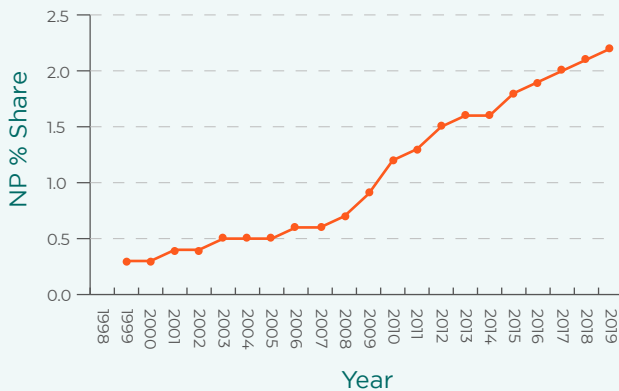
- NPs report higher levels of satisfaction when they can work to their full scope and practice.



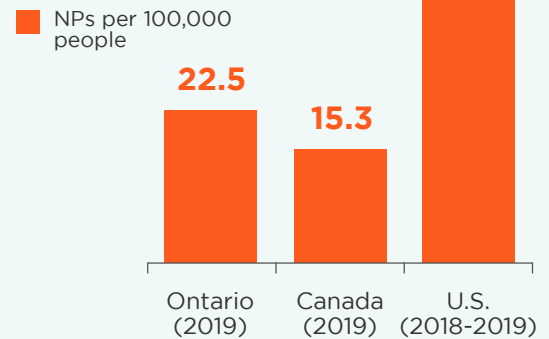
- NPs provide primary care as safely and effectively as physicians.
- NPs improve timely access to care and patient outcomes across all settings.
- NPs are leaders in advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

- NPs earn significantly less than family physicians while delivering similar quality outcomes.

NP % share of Ontario nursing employment, 1998 - 2019



Per capita comparison of NPs in Ontario, Canada and the U.S.



Optimizing NP utilization



The number of NPs in Ontario must increase in order to meet the demand for their competencies, knowledge and skills, especially as our health system is transformed and becomes more integrated.



There is a need for more placement opportunities for NP students in remote, rural or under-served communities.



A number of legislative and practice changes are needed to remove barriers that currently impede NPs' ability to work at full scope and capacity.



Members of the public are very satisfied with their NP, however, the public could benefit from further education on the extent of the NP scope and role.



NP remuneration and benefits packages vary between and within sectors and this is demoralizing NPs.